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“In a Station of the Metro” By Ezra Pound Analysis

Ezra Pound founded of the Imagist movement in the early twentieth century. Pound was unaware that he would start an entirely new style of writing by just putting a simple statement on the bottom of one of his acquaintance’s works. While reading Hilda Doolittle’s poem, Pound underlined several separate versus of the poem that stood out and wrote “H. D. Imagiste” underneath the final stanza. This simple act would forever be known as the start to the Imagist movement and paved the way for a newly established, modern, form of poetry in 1912. Imagist poetry is characterized as a clear expression through the use of precise visual images (A Brief Guide). The poems are short and usually contain an image that serves as a metaphor also. Since Pound head started the movement, his poem, “*In a Station of the Metro*”, is the epitome of imagist poetry because of its clear speech, image, and individuality.

A requisite for imagism poetry is that the poem must contain clear speech to employ the exact word (Explanation). “*In a Station of the Metro”,* is a poem consisting of fourteen words which clearly depicts the message that the speaker is standing in a busy and dark metro station. What makes the poem unique and remarkable however is how it transforms into an intuitive metaphor (A Brief Guide). The speaker is relating the subway station to the dark, dreary, and hectic essence of life in which we move along so quickly that we miss the faces and people of those who pass by. The speaker could be a businessman on his way to work who sees the eventful place every day but never realizes who or what he passes. The tone of the speaker employs the sense of an eeriness of ghostly faces in a dark hallway. The word “apparition” (1.1) is the key to the eerie tone and provides the reader with a sort of phantom or ghastly expression on the faces in the crowd. Since this is an imagist style poem, there is not elaborate allusion hinting at the ghoul look plastered on the faces, instead the author immediately states it with his clear speech.

The major element of imagism that is evident in this poem is of course, the image. In a simple fourteen words, Pound successfully portrays the gloomy subway station with the ghostly appearances of the passengers. The reader can feel the wetness of the station, hear the zooming trains as they pass, see the passengers, smell the exhaust fumes and taste the humid air. This allows the author to successfully place the reader into the shoes of the speaker to experience and feel as if they are truly in a metro station. The use of a metro station as an image suggests that our hectic life is in constant motion as we move about our day from place to place. We might never take the time to look up and realize our soundings or even enjoy them. This image provokes both an emotion and idea because the audience might feel as if they do not realize how much they might of missed which is sad, but now they have the idea to be more aware and take the more opportunities that one discovers.

Imagist poems are extremely unique because they contain so much inspiration and comparison in a single verse. Since imagist poems are free verse, they do not have to pertain to a certain subject, rhyme pattern, or rhythm pattern. This particular poem however does contain more than a picture. It has a slight metaphor to the busy everyday life of our culture and represents the civilian who lives this life. Another quality that makes this poem unique is the aspect of sound. Since the author provides the reader with such an accurate image, the reader can hear the wet puddles on the floor and the rustling of the people as they shuffle by. The sound reinforces the meaning that it is easy to get lost and caught in our everyday life, but we need to remember to take time to pause and enjoy the silence.

Pound expresses his theme of a busy life in this short imagist poem *“In a Station of the Metro”,* through the clarified speech, depicted pictures, and renewed originality. These short and precise poems were seen as rebellious towards the poems of earlier ages because they did not go into elaborate allusions and metaphors to confuse the reader to make them think. However, the short poems can still make you think, but the first directly give one the picture and from there your imagination can wonder on the other themes hidden in the short line. In the twentieth century, these short poems lead the way for free verse poems and began to change the way that poetry was seen, viewed, and wrote.

Works Cited

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